

## *Chapter Two*

# THE ST. ANDREWS LAND COMPANY

*WE MAY SAFELY assert that never before in the history of St. Andrews was there such excitement over movements in real estate as existed during the past ten days. Exaggerated rumours prevailed and at every place, in stores or on the streets, where two or more persons were assembled, land sales and speculations as to the object of the purchasers were sure to be the most important topic discussed. — St. Andrews Bay Pilot, March 1, 1888*

**I**T IS TEMPTING to think that in the crowd at the Court House that day there stood two friends—Frank Cram and Robert Gardiner. Cram grew up poor near Bangor but by dint of ambition, hard work and native intelligence worked his way through the railroad ranks to become General Manager of the European and North American Railroad, Bangor and Aroostook, and Eastern Freight Agent for the Maine Central. Cram had come to St. Andrews in 1885 to take over the running of the New Brunswick and Canada railway but his ambition did not stop there. He was a man with a vision of larger things for the town. It was he, for example, who later suggested that William Van Horne have a look at St. Andrews as a possible summer home. With his many railroad connections in New England, he made a shrewd guess that if the right transportation connections were in place, visitors from south of the border might be lured just a little farther north than Mound Desert Island.

Gardiner hailed from Newton, Massachusetts. He had been coming to St. Andrews since the late 1870s, and was an early resident at the Argyll. An ambitious and successful businessman well known in the Boston area, he was at forty-five years of age already vice-president of the Rand Avery Supply

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*The Algonquin as it appeared on opening day, 1889. This photograph was published as a part of a tourist booklet by local photographer D. Will MacKay. A curious detail is the individual standing on the roof.*

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Company, which he had formed in 1883, and president of the New England Railway Publishing Company, both of which printed railway and steamship timetables, maps, and tickets. It was later written of him that he was one of those men for whom to think is to act. He not only loved St. Andrews, he had a keen interest in developing the summer tourist business on the bay. He and Cram foresaw that with the Short Line in place, the summer population could be expected to increase sharply and create additional demand for summer accommodations. Their thinking, however, went beyond the idea of simply another Argyll. They envisioned a complete summer leisure package that might compete with Bar Harbor, replete with not only a first-class hotel, but with an accompanying cottage development, golf course, and beach.

The events which followed happened in such rapid succession that Gardiner and his compatriots seemed only to have been waiting for the right conditions to launch a venture that they hoped would transform St. Andrews into a summer watering place. On October 27, 1887, only two months after Sir John's speech, Captain Herbert of the Argyll and his wife Laura appeared before a notary public in Maine to transfer to Gardiner their ownership of seven of the eight lots in Block L in Bulkley's Subdivision, bounded by Mary, Adolphus, Prince of Wales and Carleton streets. The Herberts had acquired this property only five days previously, probably at Gardiner's request. By May 9, 1888 Gardiner had gained possession of the last remaining lot in this block, which had belonged to Thomas Hipwell. These eight lots would be the site of the Algonquin Hotel.

By February 1888, St. Andrews was swirling with rumours. In an editorial mysteriously titled "What Does It Mean?" the *Bay Pilot* reported that F.W. Cram, Manager of the New Brunswick and Canada Railway, had been seen in town in the company of American gentlemen, and that certain parties had been approached as to the possibility of their selling their land. In some cases memorandums of agreement had actually been signed. Never in the history of the town had there been such excitement over real estate. Some thought a summer hotel was to be built at Musquash by Boston gentlemen; others, that the purchase of Minister's Island was imminent; and yet others, that the CPR was behind it and that St. Andrews stood poised to become its fabled winter port on the Atlantic. The *Pilot* stilled these rumours when it reported the next week, "the parties so far known to be at the head of the movement for the purchase of real estate at St. Andrews are Americans, and railroad men who say their only interest is to secure building lots and to make St. Andrews a watering place second to none on the Atlantic sea board of the North American continent, and to create a traffic during the summer months that will add to the earnings of the New Brunswick Railway Company."



From Samuel Adams Drake, *The Pine-Tree Coast*, 1889.

OPPOSITE Robert S.  
Gardiner. CHARLOTTE COUNTY  
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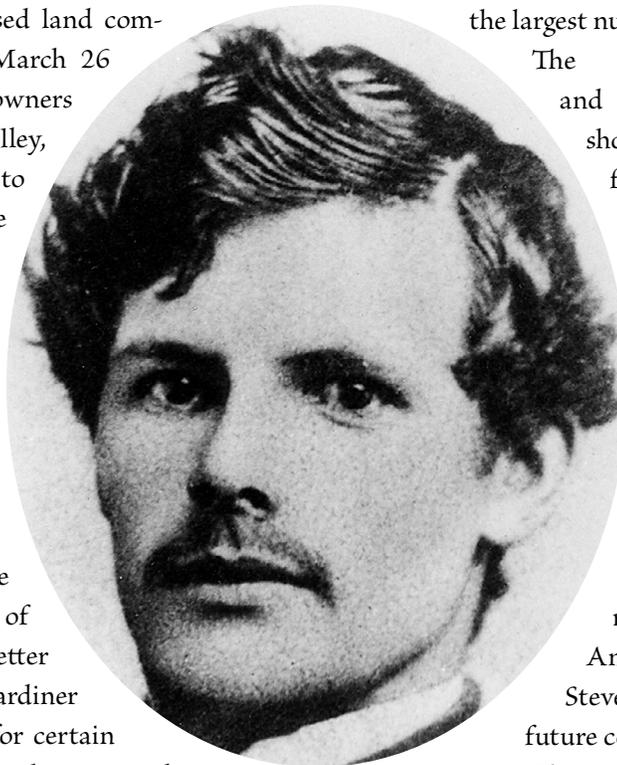
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Events then proceeded rapidly. By March 1 it was revealed that Cram, acting on behalf of a proposed American syndicate, had negotiated the purchase of major sections of town lands, principally large tracts of farm land at Indian Point, at Joe's Point, along the Bar Road, around Katy's Cove, along Acadia Drive, and on Cemetery Road, as well as blocks and lots along Prince of Wales. It was revealed also that Sir Leonard Tilley, the lieutenant-governor of New Brunswick and president of the Imperial Trusts Company of Canada, had had the lands deeded in his name, pending the incorporation of the proposed land company later in March. By March 26 some fourteen property owners had sold their lands to Tilley, and more lands continued to be bought up after this date when the syndicate acquired the power to negotiate in its own name.

Behind the scenes, Gardiner and his partners arranged to be represented by Judge Benjamin R. Stevenson of St. Andrews, member of the Legislature and formerly part-owner of the Argyll Hotel. In a letter dated March 1, 1888, Gardiner gave Stevenson permission for certain individuals to be included in the proposed act of incorporation which he hoped with Tilley's influence would be pushed through the Legislature post-haste. The principal members were John Emory Hoar, Eugene F. Fay, and Rosco A. Cobb, of Brookline, Massachusetts; Albert D.S. Bell, Robert S. Gardiner, and Daniel B. Claffin of Newton Center; Charles V. Lord of Bangor; and Abraham Avery of Boston.

There were other names which Gardiner preferred not to mention, as he feared too heavy an American presence on the proposed bill might work against its speedy passage in the Legislature. They were listed on

the Land Company's first promotional pamphlet in 1889. There were John B. Coyle of Portland, general manager of the International Steamship Company; F.E. Boothby of Portland, general passenger agent of the Maine Central Railroad; Hon. C.F. Bragg, mayor of Bangor; and finally Cram himself. Later correspondence revealed that the biggest shareholder in the Land Company was R.S. Gardiner, with sixty of the 375 shares. Sir Donald Smith, a Canadian, owned thirty-eight. There were some local investors as well. Of these, William Murchie, a St. Stephen lumber baron, owned the largest number at twenty.



The correspondence of Fay and Gardiner with Stevenson shows a certain haste and need for secrecy. In a March 1 letter, Gardiner enclosed a cipher for all future correspondence with either him or Fay, adding that he considers it "of *utmost importance* to act promptly, else a similar move may be made by outside parties." Recognizing the natural curiosity of the town with regard to movements by the American interests, Fay advised Stevenson to avoid postcards in all future correspondence.

The American investors wanted to avoid creating a land boom that would drive up the price of real estate. Gardiner complained to Stevenson that he had to pay more for the Hipwell property than he would have liked and that outside parties were already buying land in hopes of reselling it later. A *Pilot* article noted that even the ladies were catching the boom. A Mrs. T. Smith of St. Stephen, for example, had purchased four town lots on the hill. George Gardiner, member of a Calais land company, came to town to inspect the old Megantic Hotel on Water Street and soon bought, expanded, and renovated it.

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By March 15 the town had learned that two companies were slated for incorporation at the next session of the Legislature—the St. Andrews Land Company “whose object will be to deal in and improve lands in the Parish of St. Andrews and other parishes in the County of Charlotte, with a capital stock of \$50,000.00,” and the Chamcook Water Company, “whose object will be to supply water from the Chamcook Lakes to parties resident in the parish of St. Andrews and other parishes in the County of Charlotte, with a capital stock of \$100,000 and power to issue \$100,000 bonds on their property and other powers to enable them to carry out this object.” It had become clear that the plan was to turn St. Andrews into a fashionable watering place and not a terminus of the CPR.

The town would have much preferred a winter to a summer port because it would bring year-round business. As a poor town, however, it was still vitally interested in its future as a tourist destination. In an editorial titled “The Boom,” the editor of the *Pilot* used the example of Bar Harbor to demonstrate what St. Andrews might expect. “As an illustration of what the introduction of capital will do for places not having a tithe of the advantages possessed by St. Andrews,” it wrote, “we mention Bar Harbor in the neighbouring State of Maine, which a few years since was almost unheard of outside of the state. The report of the town officers of Eden in which Bar Harbor is located shows the valuation to be \$3,436, 323, an increase of \$1,758,533 over last year’s valuation. The valuation of the property of non-resident owners exceeds that of resident owners by \$280,000.00. Total expenditures of the town for the past year were \$141,051.00 of which sum \$65,000.00 was spent in the construction of new sewers.”

Speculation continued through April when the now-incorporated St. Andrews Land Company, with its main office on Federal Street in Boston, called a town meeting in Stevenson Hall to state its aims and objectives. R.S. Gardiner, the Land Company’s secretary, rose to address a packed room. “I feel I hardly need an introduction to a St. Andrews audience,” said Gardiner. “Nine years ago I heard of your town as a restful place, came here with my family every summer since. I am familiar with your wharves, your fish, know where the largest and most fish are to be caught, particularly when one fails to catch them. I propose to outline the plans and purposes of the association of Americans who propose to do something for your town.” He stated that this was not merely a land speculation and explained that no one in the town except perhaps the company’s counsel, Judge Stevenson, stood to gain one penny from this venture. In fact many of those approached earlier in the year as to possible assistance insisted that their help was contingent upon some real benefit deriving to the town. Nevertheless, the Land Company itself was not at all philanthropic in its intentions. It intended to

  
OPPOSITE *Land Company map showing the four principle routes by which St. Andrews would be reached—the International Steamship line from Boston, touching at Portland and Eastport; the Grand Trunk from Montreal to Portland via Sherbrooke; the Maine Central to Mattawamkeag, and the CPR Short Line from Montreal to McAdam touching at both Sherbrooke and Mattawamkeag.* CHARLOTTE COUNTY ARCHIVES

